

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #20

Romans 5:12-21

It doesn't matter who we are or what we are - time is ticking away and if the Lord does not return soon, we are all going to die. It is just a matter of time.

Now of course the real theological question is, “Why?” Why does death exist? Especially when one is supposedly right with God, why should he die? After all, Paul says in Romans 5:1 that when we have been justified we are at peace with God. Why do we have to die?

JUST AS DEATH IS A JUDICIAL NEGATIVE THAT AFFECTS ALL SINFUL PEOPLE, SO GOD'S FREE GRACE IS A JUDICIAL POSITIVE THAT AFFECTS ALL JUSTIFIED PEOPLE.

Death is actually part of a highly calculated plan of God, which enables God to bring us into a right relationship with Him. **If the death penalty comes to us by judicial calculation, then justification may also come to us by judicial calculation.**

When we think in terms of death Biblically, the key word to remember is “separation.” In death something is separated from something else. There are three types of death in the Bible:

- 1) There is physical death - the body is separated from the soul/spirit.
- 2) There is spiritual death - every sinner is separated from God due to sin.
- 3) There is eternal death - unbeliever is separated from God forever in hell.

The big question is, “Why is there death?” This text makes it very clear that we die because of Adam's sin. We are facing the death penalty because of Adam. Every human is related to Adam and the proof is we will die - the death ratio is still one for one.

What we will see here is that death is not only an Adamic penalty for sin, but it is also part of a carefully calculated judicial system of God that enables Him to declare people righteous in Jesus Christ. Paul said it this way in I Corinthians 15:22 - “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION #1 – What all people have in Adam. 5:12-14

Negative Reality #1 - We received sin from Adam. 5:12a

Negative Reality #2 - We received death from Adam. 5:12b

Negative Reality #3 - We received the death penalty from Adam. 5:12c

The key verb of **verse 12** is “all sinned.” This verb is in a tense which looks back on a specific moment in history, in the mind of God, in which - 1) all sinned, 2) all were sentenced to die, and 3) all were given the death penalty. That specific moment was in the sin of Adam.

Now here is a critical theological point to realize. **We are not going to die because of our personal sin even though we have all personally sinned; we are going to die because of Adam's sin** and we may prove this in three ways:

(Way #1) - The context is a contrast between two federal heads - what we have in Adam as opposed to what we can have in Christ.

(Way #2) - The text specifically says exactly this - **5:16, 17, 18, 19.**

(Way #3) - The illustration in **verses 13-14** prove this. The “for” introduces an explanatory illustration of Paul’s point in **verse 12.**

There are three specific points that Paul makes in his illustration in **verses 13-14:**

Point 1 - Sin was in the world before the Law. **5:13a**

Point 2 - Sin was not imputed or calculated by God against an individual until the Law. **5:13b**

Point 3 - All people still died from the time of Adam until the time of Moses. **5:14**

Since these people did not disobey a direct command of God like Adam did, why did these people die? There was no law to give them direct commandments. If God was not imputing personal sin against an individual, why did they die? The answer is they died for the same reason you and I will die, because of the sin of Adam. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “When Adam sinned, the world was turned into a vast cemetery.” However, what Jesus Christ is judicially able to do for us is a far greater antithesis of what Adam can do to us:

1. Adam is the head of all sinful people.
Christ is the head of all righteous people.
2. Adam was born to live but brought death.
Christ was born to die but brought life.
3. Adam was tested in Eden and failed.
Christ was tested in the wilderness and triumphed.
4. Adam died as a result of his sin.
Christ died as a result of our sin.
5. Adam brings judgment upon us.
Christ takes judgment from us.
6. Adam gets ousted from Eden.
Christ gets us entrance into heaven.
7. Adam ruins our fellowship with God.
Christ restores our fellowship with God.

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION #2 – What justified people have in Jesus Christ . 5:15-21

Superiority #1 - Those in Christ have something greater than the Adamic penalty . 5:15

We may observe that in this section, there are two nouns that keep showing up several times. Both nouns have an article with them. The first is “the gift ” (15, 16, 17, 18). The second is “the grace ” (15, 17, 20, 21). **We could call this “the great grace gift” which is justification .**

What Paul means is that the great grace gift in which God declares a sinner righteous is something far greater than anything we received in Adam. Of course the first thing we received in Adam was the penalty or sentence of death . The penalty for the offense in Adam was death. But for those who have received the great grace gift of justification, that penalty is removed . Grace abounds to “the many” (τους πολλους), which is a reference to those specific people who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

The world is comprised of two groups of people: 1) The many (οι πολλοι) who are still condemned in Adam because of his sin and 2) the many (τους πολλους) who are justified and not condemned in Christ in spite of their sin. Every person here right now is in one of these two groups. This is an either/or group classification. You cannot be in both groups. You are in one or the other. You are either justified and not condemned, or you are not justified and you are condemned.

Superiority #2 - Those in Christ have something greater than the Adamic judgment . 5:16

God made a judicial judgment - He judged us condemned in Adam. This then enables Him to make another judicial judgment which judges us righteous in Jesus Christ.

We were judged guilty in Adam because of his one sin, but when we believe on Jesus Christ we are judged righteous in Christ in spite of all of our own sins. Our condemnation was determined by one sin, but our justification covers all of our many sins.

Notice carefully, justification is the free grace gift. It is not a works gift, an earned gift, a merited gift, a deserved gift. It is a free grace gift.

Superiority #3 - Those in Christ have something greater than the Adamic destiny . 5:17

There are two epoch moments in the theological history of mankind: 1) The action of Adam which brought condemnation to this world, and 2) The action of Jesus Christ which brings justification to this world.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer says that in reality God sees but two kinds of people in this world - those in Adam and those in Christ .

We are in Adam and the proof is we will die. However, if one is not in Christ, not only will he die, but he is headed for eternal condemnation in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

However, if you are in Christ, your destiny is entirely different. **You are heading to everlasting life in which you will reign forever with Jesus Christ.**

You may carefully observe from this verse that justification must be “received.” Grace must be received. Not everyone has justification. Every person has received the Adamic curse of death, but not every person has received Jesus Christ, the justification gift of life. But for those who receive Him, they are heading to reign with Jesus Christ forever.

Superiority #4 - Those in Christ have something greater than Adamic condemnation. **5:18-19**

These verses tell us that those in Adam have been condemned and “were made sinners,” whereas those in Christ have been justified and “made righteous.”

The verb “made” (v. 19) is passive. We have nothing to do, in and of ourselves, with the action of being made a sinner in Adam. We are the recipients of Adam’s sentence. Also, we have nothing to do, in and of ourselves, in the action of being made righteous in Christ. We are the recipients of His work on our behalf. Dr. S. L. Johnson said, “We are condemned through no fault of our own and we are justified through no merit of our own.”

How actually are we made righteous? By God’s judicial calculation. God calculated you dead in Adam and He will calculate you alive in Jesus Christ.

Superiority #5 - Those in Christ have something greater than the Law. **5:20-21**

These verses show there is a sharp distinction between Law and grace.

The purpose of the Law was to “increase sin.” The purpose of “increased sin” is to super increase and abound “grace.”

The more you have broken the Law of God, the more you have sinned against God. The more you realize you have sinned against God, the more you realize the grace of God.

God has never been in the business of saving righteous people. He has always been in the business of saving lawbreaking sinners. Will you believe on Jesus Christ today? If you will, you will be justified forever by the Sovereign God of the Bible.